



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the
Archbishop of Southwark and inspection of
Denominational Education under Section 48
Of the Education Act 2005
URN 100176

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School
Appleton Road
Eltham
SE9 6NS

Inspection date: 14 November 2012

Chair of Governors:	Mr P Drake
Headteacher:	Mr P Finlay
Inspectors:	Mrs A Oddy
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EDUCATION COMMISSION

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SECTION 48

Introduction

Description of the school

St Thomas More Catholic School is voluntary aided. It is situated in the Greenwich Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is maintained by Greenwich LA. The principal parish which the school serves is St John Fisher and St Thomas More, Eltham, Well Hall. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 98%. The average weekly curriculum time given to Religious Education is 10% in Key Stage 1 and 2. The school takes pupils from 4 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 205. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is slightly above the national average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs who are supported at school action plus or who have statements of special educational needs is close to the national average. Most pupils are of White British heritage, followed by equal proportions of pupils from White European and Black African backgrounds. The proportion of pupils new to English or who speak English as an additional language is above average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness as a Catholic school

GRADE
2

The Catholic life and Religious Education provided at St Thomas More is good. The school is strongly committed to its Catholic ethos and identity. It is a welcoming and supportive community with a clear mission of inclusivity and aiming for excellence for all. Relationships within the school community are excellent. Pupils and staff are proud of their school and enjoy being part of it. Leaders and managers provide direction and support. Governors are very involved in the school and fulfil their role of support and challenge. Parents are appreciative of the school and speak warmly of the Catholic education it provides. One wrote 'St Thomas More is a very welcoming and open school. My children often talk about various Religious Education activities they have done and I am very happy with the school's care and provision for my children'.

The school provides an attractive and stimulating learning environment. It is well resourced, effectively organised and meticulously maintained. The school has an accurate view of its own strengths and development needs and has good capacity to improve further. Management of Religious Education is thorough and effective; but now needs to address further developing the current systems of assessment and pupil tracking in Religious Education as a priority. This, together with an emphasis on developmental marking should assist in continuing to raise standards and ensure that all pupils achieve their full potential.

Development of the school's systems of assessment and pupil tracking was recommended by the last inspection and needs to continue.

Other recommendations regarding moderated work and review of school policies for Religious Education and worship have been fully addressed.

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

Governors, headteacher and staff should:

- Develop the school's systems of assessment and pupil tracking in Religious Education to provide an accurate picture of pupil progress, to include the progress of individuals and groups over time and to use this data as the basis for target setting and to inform teaching and learning.
- To implement a policy of 'next steps' and interactive marking, applied consistently across the school to enable pupils to make maximum progress in Religious Education.

The Catholic life of the school

Leadership and management

GRADE 2

Leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school is good, with a number of outstanding features. The headteacher and his deputy are excellent role models and enthuse and inspire pupils and staff. Governors are frequent visitors to the school. They are active in monitoring provision for Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school and have made useful suggestions for activities to enrich the pupils' spiritual development. They enjoy receiving personally written invitations to school events from individual pupils and ensure that they respond and attend, strengthening the relationship between pupils and governors. New governors are provided with an effective induction programme, including Diocesan training regarding governing a Catholic school. Staff work well together, support each other and are a strong team, focused on the school's Catholic identity. The sense of mission is clearly shared by leaders and managers and all staff.

The inclusion of all pupils is central to school life and is shown by the importance accorded to it by leadership and management. Examples include instrumental provision and tuition for all pupils and a budget allocation to ensure that no pupil is excluded from activities due to financial constraints. The school is outstandingly well kept, with all taking responsibility and pride in their school environment. Resources are good. Communication links with parents are excellent, making effective use of text, email and newsletters, as well as an informative and user-friendly website, which is regularly updated. The school has good links with the parish, the Diocese, outside agencies and other Catholic schools. Pupils' attendance is excellent, they enjoy coming to school and are proud of it. The School Council takes its responsibilities seriously and has made several suggestions, which have been implemented effectively. Examples include improvement to school facilities and a variety of fund raising activities.

Quality of provision for personal and collective worship

GRADE 2

Prayer and worship are central to the life of the school. Pupils are offered a range of opportunities including assemblies, Masses and school liturgies. Parents and parishioners are invited to these and attendance is good. The assembly observed was enhanced by reflective meditation and enthusiastic singing. Pupils were encouraged to relate the theme to their own lives and their behaviour towards others. Pupils have opportunities to write their own prayers. In one lesson observed, a pupil read out his own prayer, which was incorporated into the lesson. All classrooms have attractive prayer focus areas, which are well resourced and effectively used in class prayer and Religious Education lessons. High quality displays feature pupils' reflections, prayers and the lives of the saints, as well as Religious Education topics.

The parish priest is a frequent visitor to the school. Mass is celebrated in school and the school also visits the parish church for Mass. Staff attend the First Holy Communion celebrations and support the First Holy Communion programme within the curriculum.

Community cohesion

GRADE 2

Community cohesion is good. The school is committed to serving its community, both locally and more widely. Pupils are encouraged to think of others and are active in fundraising for CAFOD and a number of other charities. Locally the school works with its immediate neighbours on initiatives such as traffic calming in the neighbouring streets. Pupils and staff are encouraged to be environmentally aware, including energy saving at school participating in cycling proficiency programmes to encourage cycling to school and

the Walk to School campaign. Parents and grandparents are welcomed into the school, helping with activities and attending events. The diverse school community is celebrated by events such as the Summer Barbecue featuring 'Food Around the World'. A Parent Partnership helps parents to be involved in and support their children's learning. Curriculum provision includes Black History month, the study of other faiths and consideration of those who fought for equality and justice. The school has good links with local secondary schools and with the other Catholic primary schools.

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Religious Education

Achievement and standards in Religious Education

GRADE 3

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are satisfactory, as shown by pupils' work and class records of assessments. End of Key Stage assessments indicated that the great majority of pupils met age related expectations, although few achieved the higher levels at both Key Stage 1 and 2. Samples of levelled work have been moderated both within the school and externally in conjunction with other local Catholic schools, validating the judgements made. The school has identified developing its systems of assessment and pupil tracking as an area for development. This was a recommendation of the last inspection and still needs to be developed more fully and with a clearer focus. The school has recently introduced a 'Pupil Tracker' programme and intends to extend this to include Religious Education. As this becomes embedded in school practice, it should provide more robust evidence of achievement and standards over time. It should enable data to be collected regarding the progress of individuals and groups. Using this to inform teaching and learning and targeting support and challenge interventions as appropriate, would enable the school to raise attainment and address underperformance. The school should also introduce target setting in Religious Education, together with 'next steps' marking to support pupils in achieving their targets.

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

GRADE 2

In the lessons observed, pupils made appropriate progress and worked well. All lessons observed were good. Learning assistants provided useful support and a variety of strategies were generally effectively employed. Planning was thorough and showed evidence of differentiated tasks for different groups of pupils. Teachers displayed good subject knowledge and commitment to teaching Catholic beliefs and values. In one lesson the principles of the lesson were effectively linked with the parish priest's homily at a recent school Mass. Pace in all lessons was good and work was tailored to pupils' needs. Work in pupils' books was well presented and regularly marked, although marking was largely affirmative and showed little evidence of developmental or interactive marking. The school needs to implement a policy of 'next steps' marking together with target setting in Religious Education. Pupil behaviour was excellent. They were keen to participate and responded well to questioning.

The Religious Education curriculum

GRADE 2

The school follows the programme 'The Way, the Truth and the Life'. The curriculum fulfils the requirements of the Diocese and the Curriculum Directory and has an appropriate time allocation. Irrespective of ability, pupils are able to make progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding, encouraged to develop their spirituality and to apply this to their daily lives. They are taught to respect other faiths and cultures. Judaism, Sikhism, Islam and Hinduism are included in the Religious Education curriculum in a regular cycle and the study of these faiths is enriched by visits to places of worship and talks by visiting speakers. ICT is used effectively and attractive artwork based on Religious Education is visible across the school.

Leadership and management of Religious Education

GRADE 2

Leadership and management in Religious Education is good. The Religious Education coordinator is strongly focused on the school's Catholic mission and is committed to raising standards and promoting the faith development of pupils. There is a shared sense of mission between staff, who are encouraged and supported by the coordinator and headteacher. Development needs are being identified and systematically addressed, with

assessment and pupil tracking being a priority. Resources are good and Religious Education receives an appropriate budget allocation each year. Governors are fully aware of, and encourage, the high profile of Religious Education in the school. They receive regular reports from the coordinator and the headteacher and play an important role in the Catholic life of the school. Good links exist with parents, parishes and the diocese to support work in Religious Education. Staff are provided with a variety of INSET opportunities in Religious Education, both within the school and together with other Catholic schools in the locality.

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